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CURRENT OPINION

More Uniformity in Worship

Mr. W. H. Erb writes on "Uniformity in Public Worship" in the *Reformed Church Review* for January, 1914. Prescribed forms of worship were in general use in the third century. The church of the fifth century, which was really one and therefore truly catholic, used in divers countries liturgies which were strikingly similar, and this manifestation of the unity of the church impressed favorably the pagan world. In our times and in this country there is a distinct evolution in the matter of public worship. Some things have come to be accepted as a matter of course; there is less rant and confusion, there is just as much sincerity and spirituality. Speaking for his own denomination, Mr. Erb would like some specific form of service embodying the spirit of the church, showing her peculiar mission. The prayerbook of the Episcopal church has done more to make that denomination distinct than her doctrines, which certainly admit of variety.

A Modernist's View of Authority in Religion

Miss M. D. Petre publishes in the *Hibbert Journal* for January, 1914, her address to the International Congress of Religious Progress, held in Paris last year, under the title "The Advantages and Disadvantages of Authority in Religion." It is not easy to define Modernism. This very able piece of work, called the encyclic *Pascendi*, has given us a *credo* of Modernism, and upon this basis the *Curia romana* has gone to work. And some say that now, as a result of this activity, Modernism is dead. It is true that reaction triumphs now in the Roman church and that many a Modernist has ceased to hope for victory, but Modernism can no more perish than the air which we breathe: the church herself cannot live

without it for any length of time. Modernism is the right conception of liberty and authority, adjusting their rival claims, utilizing both principles in the building-up of religion and the church. Religion cannot be understood without an institution, the church. No institution can exist without a principle of authority. It is true that most men care for comfort and ease more than for freedom, and in the majority of cases they get more of that comfort if they live in subjection than when they are entirely free. Again there is an obedience inspired by love of the ideal, be it the service of the country, or of a great man like Napoleon, or of a religious leader. Therefore, no criticism of authority will be useful for practical purposes if it fails to take account of this double tendency to obey, the one springing from the natural sloth of many characters, the other from an ideal of self-sacrifice. It seems a truism that the right conception of authority will be such as to compel no man to obey without his full consent. External obedience is only an apparent triumph of authority; no obedience is perfect which does not comprise that of the will and of the intelligence. The soldier is asked to pay only outward respect, but in religious matters nothing short of a tribute of the entire man, soul and body, can be demanded. And for this reason it is evident that the law must cease to bind when the reason, the self-governing faculty, can go no farther.

It is certain that the Roman hierarchy and other seats of authority in matters of faith would object very much to this treatment of their prerogatives. We seem to hear in this view of Miss Petre an echo or a restatement of Calvin's theory of "the Mastery of the Spirit" (*la maîtrise de l'esprit*).

In the conclusion of her paper Miss Petre

shows that the advantages of authority are that it guides those who cannot guide themselves and stands for the high principle of love and union by the subjection of the private to the Universal Will. Its disadvantages are that being centered in limited beings it can wander. Yes, and we may add here, the excommunication of men like Tyrrell and more recently of Lemire shows how authority can be oppressive and become retrograde.

The Old Testament a Modern Message

Much has been written on this subject, but we can never say too often that constructive criticism has given to the church a living Old Testament, throbbing with actuality. Dr. MacFadyen writes on this theme of "The Old Testament and the Modern World" in the *Expositor* for January, 1914. It is certain that God spoke to the Fathers by the prophets; the question now is, Does he speak to *us* through them? The world seems to change in a terrific evolution, but the problems and sorrows of life are ever the same. The Old Testament is intensely human; it is a book of hope, but hope in this world and for this world; it teaches us how to interpret the great currents of life, of these mysterious forces of history through which suffering humanity is to be redeemed. The Hebrew seers did not dogmatize about metaphysical niceties; life was too real for them; they believed in a God who was molding nature and society and gave life because he was life. They saw God in the joys of a wedding and of a vintage festival, they heard his voice in the thundering clash of war, they divined him beyond the mysteries of birth, death, and sorrow. While the Old Testament has its roots in those enduring realities, it speaks to us men of the twentieth century with an accent that is peculiarly modern in its treatment of the problems of the individual, of society, and of the world at large. The great prob-

lem of justice was just as acute for the Hebrew believers as for us; they solved it in a practical way, binding together by an indissoluble link the service of God and the service of man, inspiring ethics with a sublime faith, pure and adamant-like: God's cause *will* triumph in a future which is the issue of the present.

Japan and Christianity

The Churchman for January, 1914, devotes a page to an article by a member of the Japanese Imperial Diet, Dr. Uzawa, M.P., in answer to the question "Does Japan Need Christianity?" It is a clear, affirmative answer. His position rests upon the assumption that religion in some form is essential to man's wholesome existence as well as to human progress. The question, then, is not, Does Japan need a religion? but, What religion does Japan need? "We in the East," he goes on to say, "have been a civilized people for some three thousand years, but our religion in that time did not do as much for us as Christianity did for Europe and the West in half that time. No religion exists which does not contain some light, however crude the religion; but only from Christian sources comes the pure, white light of lucid personality and transparent character. Christianity is the white corpuscle to protect the soul's blood, and consequently the whole man, from evil spiritual influences. Our country," he adds, "is very successful at producing criminals and incorrigible youth; why not now welcome an influence that will make men? When I say what this religion can do for a man, I speak out of the seriousness and fulness of my own experience. Both in my experience as a lawyer and as a member of the Imperial Diet I have been confirmed in my conviction that no nation can successfully entertain world-wide hopes and ambitions without the help of a universal religion, nor can she make a universal appeal without the inspiration of the Christian

religion." Referring to the California situation and the recent Korean conspiracy trial, he very graciously suggests that possibly both sides need more Christianity.

The Meaning of Tradition

Professor W. R. Arnold writes in the *Harvard Theological Review* for January, 1914, on "Theology and Tradition." There is, in academic circles, a widespread conviction that theology is not and can never be scientific, mainly because theology is tradition. This however is not exact; religion is necessarily traditional; its domain is not science but concrete life and experience; theology is not religion but the interpretation of it. Just like other sciences, a free theology will look facts squarely in the face; it will not content itself with repeating ancient and perhaps dead formulas, but, considering the evolution of humanity and the enlargement of our horizon, theology will adjust itself to new conditions. There is nothing to be afraid or ashamed of in the word "tradition." The faculty of language, for instance, is a tradition: it is an organism carried by the living spirit of the race, constantly changing on its fringes while it remains a syntactical whole. Such is living tradition; such is Christianity. Our religion is an inheritance, not because we have received it in purely passive fashion as into a receptacle, but because we make it ours. Theology will humanize the records of our faith, so that we may truly assimilate them and grow into a better knowledge of the life that was in the prophets, the apostles, and the saints.

The Religious Crisis in Portugal

The January number of *Études* contains an article by Camille Torrend on "La crise religieuse en Portugal." The leaders of the young Lusitanian republic found out very soon that the Roman Catholic hierarchy was hostile to the new régime. They had fully expected it. In 1911 the law of

separation between church and state was promulgated. It was not intended to give freedom to the church, but to weaken her power. It was still less liberal than the French law of separation. Rome took up the same antagonistic position and refused to acknowledge the law. Now the church is in a precarious condition, and although persecution has abated, there is still a good deal of hostility against the clergy. Priests are not allowed to wear a cassock outside of a church. Some zealous "anticlericals" have even prescribed that the length of their frock coats must not be longer than the coats usually worn in the country. A preacher who happened to say in his sermon that "the Providence governs us" was interrupted by the mayor, who cried out, "No, Affonso Costa [the President] only governs us." A very large number of churches have been closed.

The immediate result has been the weakening of the liberal-minded clergy of the church in Portugal. M. Torrend, voicing the opinion of the Jesuits, sees in an absolute obedience and conformity to the spirit of Rome and the forsaking of lingering Jansenist ideas the only hope of saving the Lusitanian church and redeeming Portugal.

Early Babylonian Laws

In the *Orientalistische Literaturzeitung* for January, 1914, A. T. Clay writes on "A Sumerian Prototype of the Hammurabi Code." He publishes a Sumerian tablet from the Yale collection where we find two laws bearing upon the injury done to pregnant women and one making provision if a lion kills a hired ox, which are strikingly parallel to the Hammurabi Code. That the code, as we have it, is based on older Sumerian laws can now be looked upon as established. In the light of such facts the assertion of Hammurabi that he received the Code from the god Shamash himself is very interesting as a sample of oriental accuracy.